

Instructional Time Task Force Meeting Notes

August 23, 2012 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. B110, Grimes State Office Building

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Craig Patterson, Anita Micich, Anne Tesar, Sahan Jayawardena, Michelle Rich, Terry Petersen, George Wheeler, Leonard Griffith, Kay Stork, Erin Davison-Rippey, Kevin Koester, Beth Happe, Katie Byers, Sandy Klaus, Mick Jurgensen, Mike Dick, Kimberlee Spillers, Frank Spillers, Vic Jaras, Bridget Godes, Fred Kinne, Jason Chapman, Jamie Cashman, Shirley Phillips, Isaiah McGee, Gary Norris, John Parker, Jerry Parkin, Gannon Hendrick, Mary Gannon, Kathy Hanlon, Jack Ewing, Kate Bennett, Dave Epley, Jill Morrill, Mary Mary Stegmeier, Jill Burnett Requist, Mike Cormack, and Jody Crane.

AGENDA ITEM: Welcome and Group Priorities

Expected Outcome	Lead Mike Cormack	Follow Up

Notes:

Mike Cormack called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Task Force members who had not been able to attend the first meeting in July introduced themselves to everyone in attendance. Two students from Clear Lake and Mason City schools are now represented on the Task Force, per a request made during the first Task Force meeting.

Cormack reported about recent educational town hall meetings with Governor Branstad. Even though Governor Branstad did not speak about instructional time issues in his addresses, the issues, interestingly, came up at each of these meetings. Cormack reinforced that the work of the Instructional Time Task Force is important, given the interest the related issues generated among people in Iowa.

Cormack reported the reasons that Task Force members were not in attendance.

Cormack referred to a document which included guided planning for small groups. He gave everyone on the Task Force a few minutes to complete two pre-keynote questions. The questions and the answers provided by individual members of the group follow below:

Who are our stakeholders?

- Dr. Jason Glass: All students of our state (with the long-view and systemic approach)
- LOCAL COMMUNITIES
- Existing school personnel

- Parents
- The public (our "customers")
- Organizations which work directly with schools, i.e., Iowa High School Athletic Association, Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union, etc.
- Employers and business communities of lowa
- Taxpayers
- Colleges and universities (in terms of the "products" they receive and the teacher preparation programs)

What are the goals of our recommendations? What are we seeking to accomplish with our proposals?

- Increase student achievement
- Add depth, talent, and knowledge to our work force
- Achieve consensus view; determine realistic, actionable items supported by Democrats and Republicans
- Informative report for the legislators
- Create an inventive environment which would generate relationships for students to grow with a sense of hope and belonging
- Improvement of students' post-secondary opportunities and abilities, factoring-in the very different world into which students are launching

Are there folks with whom you have visited since the last Task Force meeting? Cormack asked that question and a general discussion was held on that point. Major discussion points of that conversation follow below:

The presentation of Dr. Michael Fullan at the School Administrators of Iowa was relevant to the Task Force's work. Fullan pointed out that students are not customers, because customers expect immediate gratification. This Task Force needs to be a far-sighted group to anticipate the learning needs of students who are being born today.

At a recent Des Moines Area Community College conference, related issues came up about professional development and school calendars which are set far in advance.

Additional input centered on the value of some field trips, the frequent loss of instructional time, the inefficiencies and ineffectiveness of current instructional time.

Online education is a related issue.

More time does not necessarily mean improved instructional time, so the quality of the teachers is an issue which is paramount.

Another point was that one size does not fit all. Many students will learn well with 180 days. Students in poverty probably need school days beyond 180. We need flexibility.

Kay Stork, the only current teacher on the Task Force, sought input from the staff in her school district (Cumberland-Anita-Massena). Teachers favored extended year but not extended day; some students do not have the stamina. They favored a modified year schedule, but not for all students. A majority of staff favored a fourth week of August school start.

Each Task Force member associated with a school district reported their respective school start dates for 2012-2013.

Vic Jaras reported about the Iowa software and systems in place (funded by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds) which were available for online opportunities.

AGENDA ITEM: Presentation: Dr. Terry Peterson, Afterschool & Community Learning Network, College of Charleston

Expected Outcome	Lead Dr. Terry Peterson	Follow Up
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Notes:

The keynote speaker for the morning presented to the group. This was: "Current Opportunities for the Research on the Power of Expanded Learning," a presentation by Dr. Terry Peterson, the College of Charleston, South Carolina (tkpalexwa@aol.com). He shared favorite websites with the group, expandinglearning.org, afterschoolalliance.org, and summerlearning.org. Major concepts from the presentation follows by Dr. Peterson:

This is a complex set of issues. I can't wait to see what you are going to recommend. You can set a pace for the entire country. This is an unusual group. You represent Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. You represent students.

I have worked for the U.S. Secretary of Education. I've worked at the local level. What is unique for Americans is our ability to work together.

Address factors for student success and graduation from high school – math, reading, better grades, attendance, interest in learning, etc.

Safety and supervision from 3:00-5:30 p.m. and in summers while learning new skills.

Bring in new allies for strengthening school community-family partnerships

Opportunities for leading edge learning linked to today's jobs and college access, i.e., STEM (science, technology, engineering and math).

Doing more the same and longer isn't going to help students.

There is great power through classroom and community collaboration.

We must help students find their own areas of interest to explore to learn more complex skills, responsibility, and work habits.

Students and adults need to keep learning throughout their lives.

Program Examples

- Integrating arts and discovery science across all core subjects in the after school and summer programming; design programs which are hands-on, interesting, and engaging; thinking outside-the-box.
- Earning credits through joint teacher-community organization projects; students are earning course credits through such projects. Both gifted and struggling students benefit from such programs.

- Partnerships with community colleges and four-year colleges/universities to explore future educational options and career paths, including more helping hands to stay ontrack. Students need hope and connections to the future.
- A new extensive resource including contributions from 50+ authors, researchers, and practitioner.

There is a growing body of research in this field.

QUALITY programs make a positive difference in the education and development of young people.

QUALITY programs accelerate student achievement and development through improved attendance, positive social behaviors, reduction in problem behavior, school grades, and test scores.

A 10-year study of high school students produced the following information:

After school programs in Los Angeles increase the graduation rate of students. How do you design a voluntary high-quality program which keeps students coming back?

Failing grades, poor attendance, less engagement, more misbehavior, low test scores, and low motivation are all indicators of a sixth grade student who will probably drop of out school (Balfanz).

35% of lowa's parents with children not in after-school programs would like to be.

Additional resources are needed to fill the funding gap, i.e., federal, state, municipalities, United Way, counties, local foundations, faith-based groups, school districts, partnerships through multiple organizations, and other related groups.

Quality Elements of After School and Summer Programs

- Recruiting quality staff
- Reducing staff turnover
- Strong relationships between students and staff
- Bridges built between schools and after school staff
- Hands-on learning
- School-community partnerships
- Engaged learning time
- Affordability and scalability
- Family engagement
- Health and wellness opportunities

Conclusion:

To take more students to the next level will necessitate not only reform of the regular school day, but also more quality, expanded learning opportunities powered by strong school-community-family partnerships. More of the same longer is expensive and unlikely to make much of a difference.

For lowa, is a better solution building off successful after school and summer learning programs and expand and link them better with learning and the school day, and strengthen connections to colleges/universities, employers, 4H, Boys and Girls clubs, and other related groups.

Q & A with Dr. Peterson

As a result of a 21st Century grant, 100 students in Marshalltown have taken advantage of a 6-week summer program in 2011 and 2012 have become more excited about learning and school. Starmont Community School District students of lowa have also benefitted greatly from similar programming.

Marshalltown, Dubuque, and the Quad-Cities are All-American cities which emphasize the value of community-school-family collaboration.

Use the power of imagination and invention. Showcase examples which will positively influence learners, schools, and communities. Employers can also indicate the urgency of changes to traditional school paradigms. Gather the innovators to ramp-up the influence of summer and after school programs.

Seek "Anytime Anywhere" learning experiences.

Colleges and universities could be good allies in providing human resources for the betterment of PK-12 education.

Innovative teachers who are excited about different paradigm, partnering with eager and enthusiastic new teachers AND college students as mentors, can make a profound impact on after school students.

AmeriCorps is another good partner for such programs. Retired AmeriCorps workers can earn college tuition dollars for their grandchildren or other students.

lowa leads the nation in the number of working parents, and these parents have a strong desire for after school care. Are these parents interested in after school care or after school learning? What about an after school Lego club? Chess club?

Community colleges and other community organizations are excited about partnerships. Iowa has one of the strongest community college systems in the nation.

Money always seems to be an issue. By tapping into community partners, working with the local schools, the expanded content available inside and outside schools could be done in a cost-effective manner.

Could students who receive reduced college tuition rates be obligated to give 10 hours of volunteer service to such after school and summer learning programs?

How does technology and distance learning fit into this mix?

We rightly seek programs to assist low-income students, but we also cannot forget students with special needs and developmental disabilities. Funding formulas for after care and summer programs could include a factor for percentage of special education students, as well as those at or below the poverty line.

Do we know the percentage of students who attend before-school and after-school programming? Do we know how many older students we are missing because they are not willing to attend un-engaging programs?

Third grade to fourth grade is a critical transition point. From sixth grade to seventh and from eighth to ninth are also important transition years.

In the Boys and Girls Clubs of Iowa, students who have received services become mentors as they move through the system.

Hands-on learning activities are very engaging to students. The Task Force students reported they enjoy concrete learning activities, which are more satisfying than grades. The Task Force students like to learn in real-world settings. The programs must be meaningful to and resonate with the students.

The CAM Community School District has outside learning program activities which provide hands on experience for their students.

Economic development groups and Iowa Workforce Development are good resources for such programming. Employers will provide equipment as educational resources. Administrators and teachers need to visit businesses in their communities to see the labor shortages and opportunities. Teachers could be employed at businesses in the summer to make linkages between the world of work and learning which is occurring in the schools.

Fort Madison is developing a program to increase volunteer service a part of the fabric of their schools and community. The students are leading this effort. Why not K-12 and/or community college credit for such volunteer efforts?

Another point is that stakeholders need to have "skin in the game" to increase ownership of multiple community constituents. A team can make so much more happen than individuals working in isolation.

This is just one piece of a systemic reform initiative. After care will not fix the whole system. lowa used to be 1st in the nation by several measures. Now, we are 25th in the country. So we need to do more than just high-quality after care programming. You need great leaders, great teachers, and so many other factors to improve education overall.

We offer a lot of activities to seventh through twelfth grade students. What are we doing for younger students, especially low-income students? Students would flock to highly engaging activities. Grades 2-6 will look different from Grades 7-12. Creative new activities would be exciting to students.

You'll also need to think about transportation as an issue.

Is there merit to targeting four-year-olds through third graders? Yes, but you should also account for the other major transitions in middle school and high school. READING deficiencies MUST be addressed before the 3rd grade.

International students doing better than U.S. students are learning second languages, thus stimulating the brain for advanced learning in other subjects. Europe's goal is the native language plus two. In order to compete in the global workplace, U.S. students need to learn at least a second language.

LUNCH BREAK for the group after 45 minutes of quality dialogue in the question and answer session. Dr. Peterson was thanked for his time and then he had to leave due to other time commitments.

AGENDA ITEM: Jill Burnett Requist, Des Moines Independent Community School District

Expected Outcome	Lead Jill Burnett Requist	Follow Up

"Continuous Learning Calendar"

A Presentation by Jill Burnett Requist, River Woods Elementary School, Des Moines.

We have neither a longer year nor a longer day. We have a different configuration of our 180 days.

Start date = second week of July

Fall Break = 3 weeks (September/October)

Holiday breaks follow the district calendar

Spring break = 2 weeks

April break = 1 week (Snow days are made up during April break, rather than summer break.)

Summer break = 6 weeks

The brand-new school opened in the fall of 2000. In 2001, the staff investigated options for an alternate calendar to improve student achievement. Families were given the opportunity to open-enroll out; teachers had the option to transfer to or from other schools. Initially, the school used the existing district calendar, but the school followed the continuous learning calendar for the 2002-2003 school year.

School supplies were bought in bulk to allow families to buy at cost. Neighborhood home visits signaled the earlier-than-typical school start date in July.

2000

500+ students, PK-5 7% English Language Learners 48% qualified for Free and Reduced Lunch 23% mobility rate

2012

500+ students, PK-5 38% English Language Learners (75% minority) 82% qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch 50+% mobility rate

Benefits of the Alternative Calendar

- Retention of knowledge, expectations, and routines (prevent brain drain).
- "Bonds" to school/personnel were maintained.
- Sense of stability.
- Shorter breaks = less time for boredom and mischief and greater reinvigoration for staff/students.
- Extended learning opportunities.
- Meal service (200 students for breakfast and 98% for lunch).
- Improvement of student achievement (verified by research).
- A way to save money? The better the achievement on the front-end, the better the retention and graduation rate up to graduation.
- Tailored to the needs of each community flexibility of schedule.

- More opportunities to meet the individual needs of students, especially for high school students who could pursue online learning
- Is this a no-brainer?

Challenges of Alternative Calendar

- Families following different school calendars; other students are not in school until late-August.
- Attendance is poor, as the school year begins in July (mostly due to the high mobility rate). Teachers are known only when registration is completed.
- Systemic and community readiness.
- The kids: Going to bed while it was still light, when other students were still playing outside, was perceived as a negative to the students.
- Students must still show self-discipline in using the six-week summer break time effectively.
- Likely improves learning, but. . .high school opportunities cannot be scheduled fairly or reasonably unless all secondary schools in the activities conference (or all of lowa) are mandated to continuous learning calendar.
- Impressed by elementary capacity, discouraged by middle school and high school capacity.
- Infrastructure needs (schools not air conditioned in summer).
- Staff no longer able to find long-term summer jobs to supplement their income, and staff may not be able to pursue as much professional development in the summer.
- Difficulties for parents in securing child care.
- Conflicts with junior high and high school activities and after care.

These have not been big enough problems to move us back to a traditional calendar.

Student achievement is first and foremost in our minds.

4th Grade ITBS

Percent Proficient

Year	Reading	Math
2002-2003 2007-2008	58.1 55.8	48.0 61.6
2011-2012	75	78.9

Cohorts are also improving in academic performance.

Does this calendar make a positive difference? YES! Would I want to go back to a traditional calendar? NO!

Q & A

Shorter, innovative intercession opportunities are also possible.

Teachers do not have differentiated contracts.

We design our own calendar [and they like the autonomy].

We have a strong allegiance to our neighborhood families, and we must protect the district expectations for open enrollment.

A Task Force member expressed strong satisfaction with Indianola's alternative elementary calendar.

Staffing is the biggest costs of school programming. Volunteer service could make a big dent in this challenging financial arena.

Benefits (above, added items are italicized)

<u>Challenges from Alternative Schedules (above, added items are italicized)</u>

AGENDA ITEM: Guided Small Group Work and Discussion: Instructional Time Issues

Expected Outcome	Lead	Follow Up
	Small Groups	

Notes:

After short group work, ideas were shared about the benefits and challenges of alternative calendars. These are shown below.

<u>Staggered Schedule</u> (teachers with same amount of hours but on various schedules) to give additional class time to students – positives and negatives.

Positives: partnering with other districts to offer courses, i.e., AP courses.

Negatives: more feasible in smaller than larger districts? Early A.M. unpopular. Late afternoon school adversely impacts activities and jobs; transportation issues, particularly for non-driving students; unfavorable perceptions and dialogue with this option.

<u>Hours schedule versus days schedule?</u> Also, should the 5.5 hour day be changed in any manner if we remain on a day schedule?

Both are easily done. Set up the system, and learn the system. This change should not confound educators in Iowa. Hours give us more flexibility for innovation.

Any other ideas your group can generate on issues involving the length of the day? This should not be a huge barrier to us. With hours, professional learning can be longer for teachers. Adding a few minutes to each day does not mean there will be long-term academic benefit to students, and we still have the challenge of conflicts with school and club sports after typical school hours. Tracking hours, as opposed to days, allows for less waste of instructional time for shortened periods/days. The dialogue about hours has been favorable.

Some do not like the late-start or early-out schedules for the lost learning time AND professional development time.

Eliminate snow "days" and early-outs or late-starts.

Positives and negatives of status quo start time

Positives: local control, as long as waivers are approved; freedom to innovate.

Issue: Why have a start date law if nearly all of the school districts receive a waiver?

Firm September start date:

No. Let's give local schools control of this decision. We will be less creative and lose ground in how we serve kids. You're trading two weeks of better learning in August for less learning in two weeks of June. Tourism should not drive education; what's best for students should drive changes to educational systems. A September start date would push activities back further, negatively impacting student involvement and quality of outside activities.

<u>2012 House-passed version where the last Monday of the month of August would be the solid start date:</u>

This is a better answer than the September start date, but there is still a loss of local control, loss of freedom to innovate, etc.

Other alternatives (are there any compromises that could improve on the status quo and be beneficial to lawmakers to consider).

Excellent relationships between educators and students make a huge difference in student achievement.

Research shows that high-quality teachers for multiple years in a row dramatically improve student achievement; conversely, a low-quality for even one year negatively impacts student achievement.

How do we get high-quality teachers into ALL classrooms, so students from one side of the tracks get the same high-quality education as those on the other side of the tracks? How do we keep this from becoming longer hours of school days for the lowest-performing students?! How can after-school activities also have as positive an impact on the academics as sports and other extracurricular activities?

For the past six years, and for at least 100 years into the future, Gallup is doing a poll which asks people, including students, how to create a more entrepreneurial culture to the United States (for performing and under-performing students).

How can we help students find hope and to head down a productive track for a successful live in the future, rather than a negative, constructive, counter-productive track?

What about mentorships and internships which generate "course credit," build trusted relationships, solidify career plans, and bring hope to students?

What about sabbaticals or short learning bursts for teachers to learn and be paid in the workforce to be able to more effectively "translate" reality of the world into the learning of K-12 classrooms?

Could a trade-off be made with an agreement for the fourth week of August start date for money to fund innovative calendars (and no automatic waivers).

AGENDA ITEM: Next Steps and Adjourn

Expected Outcome	Lead	Follow Up
	Mike Cormack	

Notes:

After the groups met, there was a short overall discussion of the start time issue with the group without consensus emerging. Details for the next meeting were held, with the decision being made to move the September 18 meeting to 9:30 am with an attempt to get the final report of the committee to emerge from that meeting. An initial draft to work off of for the next meeting will be put together and distributed to members. All members are encouraged to share their thoughts on the topics of start date, changes to the school day and changes to the school calendar to Mr. Cormack by Tuesday, September 4.

Interested in writing a draft for Task Force reaction at the next Task Force meeting? E-mail Bob Stouffer at rstouffer@dmcs.org and Mike Cormack at mike.cormack@iowa.gov. Thus far, Cindy McDonald, Beth Happe, and Bob Stouffer have volunteered to write the draft.

The Task Force adjourned at 3:06 pm.